



New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Monday, March 14, 2022
Committee on Youth Services- Preliminary Budget Hearing - Youth Services
Sherrise Palomino, Director of Advocacy and Programs

Good afternoon, my name is Sherrise Palomino, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Programs at New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). We are a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs. Thank you to the Youth Services Committee for the opportunity to speak about our city's recreation centers. I also want to thank Chair Stevens for her leadership on this important issue. Members of this committee have a unique opportunity to push for adequate funding for our parks systems as it is a critical component of supporting positive youth development.

The NYC Parks Department operates and maintains 59 recreation centers across the city to serve a population of over 1.8 million youth. Of the 59 community board districts, 26 don't have a NYC Parks recreation center meaning that 44% of community boards do not have a recreation center.

NYC's recreation centers are used to support communities with programs for youth and seniors alike. They should provide critical opportunities for youth development and empowerment with free programming and sports. NYC's recreation centers should be a hub for positive youth development where young people socialize and liaise in a safe and supportive environment, which is essential to their overall well-being. Instead, NYC's recreation centers are chronically under-staffed and badly in need of repairs, with roughly one third of them closed at any given time.

We are overdue for transformative investment in our parks system – 1% of the city budget for parks could ensure that recreation centers are fully staffed and functioning to provide the programming that young people need. The NYC Parks department does a valiant job maintaining these aging resources but needs more funding to do so. This is one of the many reasons why NY4P and the Play Fair Coalition are calling for an increase in the Parks budget to 1% of the city's budget – a call that the majority of City Council Members support along with Speaker Adams.

For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. www.ny4p.org